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TRAFFIC DEATH : IS THERE NO WAY ?

Mr. Howard Pyle, the President of the National Safety Council, declared recently : "The only way to meet the extra danger of holiday traffic is ~~is~~ increased care on the part of all drivers." Mr. Pyle and every responsible expert will certainly wecome an idea promising more than the old appeal, endlessly repeated, agreed and hailed, and always promptly forgotten at the fatal moment. For the only thing that really increased was the death toll, the tremendous record of the loss of 502 American lives during less than four days.

At such heights the psychological reaction to figures begins to be dangerously unreal. We are inclined to underestimate the loss of a human life when it occurs ~~with~~ along with 501 additional losses. Maybe some kind of fatalism interferes, perhaps a tendency to bow to destiny as it were. This weakness, stemming, let us say, from subconscious sources, diminishes responsibility and paralyzes the will to save, to defend oneself and everybody else from a mass catastrophe composed of individual catastrophes.

To get rid of this influence, to regain objectivity and to realize the significance of so fatal a weekend, let us compare that psychological condition to the numerous instances of stubborn endeavors and heroic attempts to save single children or adults ~~whose~~ whose adventures or pleasures led into unknown dangers. Here the psychological reactions work healthily, undisturbed by the confusing effect of figures. A single life meets logical and reasonable evaluation, based on natural feelings of self identification with the victim, his parents, his children. Firemen, policemen and civilians double their exertions when aware that it could have happened to themselves or to their kin. Millions of readers, too, follow their efforts anxiously, and final rescue of those unknown or even anonymous people makes the reader as happy as if they were his own folks.

(Cont.)

This attitude towards a life is obviously the original, the unspoiled one. It involves sometimes also big financial efforts, and those never meet any criticism. Nobody finds complicated and difficult actions undertaken for saving a human life disproportionate or too expensive. On the other hand, we know by every day experience that for precious things we have to pay a high price, since for low prices they are not available. We can't help recognizing the simple old rule : The higher the value the higher the price.

Therefore, why should we not realize that for our greatest desires we should be ready ~~to~~ to sacrifice much ? Must this principle not be applied to the question of saving Mankind ? And, proportionately, to that of preventing foreseen, predicted, periodical destruction of hundreds of ~~xxxxx~~ lives every year ?

Thus a necessarily unpopular suggestion, that at the first moment must meet strong emotional rejection, might nevertheless find some support; and after some time, it might convince many judicious and responsible people: Instead of new appeals to drivers, of limiting release of licenses, of stricter application of laws and more severe punishments, or in addition to all these means, the o p p o r t u n i t y for highway accidents must be limited. Weekends extended by immediately following holidays offer the ideal opportunity for mass traffic mishaps. Joyous youngsters, as well as elderly people, and numberless whole families drive on such holidays on crowded highways, covering, on the whole, billions of miles.

So the long weekends should be divided; the holidays falling on Fridays or Mondays must be postponed to Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

The reform proposed means not only less comfortable holidays, limited relaxation and pleasure, and various other renouncements; but also business damages and a series of objective difficulties, starting

(Cont.)

with legislative ones. All of this, however, is doubtless better than continued destruction of so many lives and crippling of healthy bodies, better than so many mourning people, and better than the deaths of whole families. Every thinking man who is in a position to share the decision about this far going suggestion, should, after all, take into consideration that he himself and his next of kin could sooner or later be among the victims, if safety in traffic is not radically improved.

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